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Author(s): C. Voonping Yui

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SOME EXPERIENCES AT THE SIEGE OF NANKING DURING THE REVOLUTION

By C. Voonping Yui, M.D., of the Chinese Red Cross Society

It affords me great pleasure to relate my experiences in Nanking last year while I was doing Red Cross work. The outbreak of the revolution started at Wuchang in the central part of China on the tenth of October, 1911. In a short period of time, Hankow, Hangyang and Wuchang came into the possession of the revolutionists. But when the attack was directed against Nanking, much resistance was encountered and the city was not captured until many lives had been sacrificed.

There are two reasons to account for the difficulty in subduing Nanking. First, Nanking is a strongly fortified city; it has the advantage of being protected by a deep and wide moat and by a number of high hills which encircle it. Unlike ordinary city-walls in China, this wall around Nanking follows the course of the surrounding hills and is built of stones as well as of bricks. Such a solid construction naturally hinders opponents from coming in or near the city. The top of this massive structure, where I walked, is wide enough to accommodate six horses trotting abreast. The city of Nanking (literally South Capital), had been twice the capital of the Empire. It was the headquarters for the Taiping rebellion, another anti-Manchu outbreak of the country in 1850. The imperial army then besieged the city for over a year without success. At last, a subterranean tunnel was dug under the center of the city and then exploded by the imperialists. By this means was the city subdued. This happened about sixty years ago, and the Manchu government did not forget the painstaking work of conquering Nanking rebels. Consequently, the Tartar regiment of that city had been especially well organized and fully equipped with modern instruments of war. This is

one of the reasons why the revolutionists encountered hard bloody battles before success finally came.

Second, the city has a Tartar general and a Chinese general, namely Tieh Lian and Chang Shun. Both were as loyal and submissive to the Manchus as their slaves, and also as cruel and brutal as tyrants. It was reported that even the slightest suspicion of helping the revolutionists would result in decapitation through the order of these enthusiasts. During the revolution many helpless and innocent persons thus lost their lives in the city without specification of their crimes or discrimination of right from wrong according to law. When the country was everywhere teeming with revolutionary spirit, Chang Shun and his fellow officials still foolishly exerted their utmost energy to drill the army and the artillery and prepared to resist the invincible forces of the people. The imperial officers thus invited strong opposition.

For these two reasons, the people had to fight with all their might in order to bring back the laurels of triumph.

How did I happen to witness a part of the bloody scene? I was connected with Nanyang College, Shanghai, as a resident physician. I was then teaching a class in first aid. As soon as the revolution began in Shanghai, I organized a first aid corps, comprising twenty-four persons, some were my students, others my friends, and one was my brother. All aimed to carry on Red Cross work and all were volunteers supplying their own funds. Although my companions and I lacked experience in such work, we were enthusiastic. When the bad news of the recapture of Hankow by the imperialists reached Shanghai, we intended to start for that city. As many Red Cross members had done splendid work there, we found our services were more needed in Nanking where merciless fighting had already taken place. So we started for Nanking November 28, 1911, and met Bishop F. R. Graves, Dr. Geo. Deval, and Dr. Gaynor on our way. Besides the ordinary equipment such as dressings, blankets, stretchers, splints, hypodermics, etc., we brought along with us four big bales of clothing, consisting of underwear, coats and trousers which afterward proved

most useful. When a helpless soldier bled through his shirt and uniform, he was encountering, first, the dangers of the hemorrhage and second, the shock from the cold and wet coat in the winter. The clumsy packages of clothing were very serviceable after dressings for wounds were fixed up.

We were not allowed to enter Nanking. We stayed near the revolutionary headquarters in a village called Marchin. For a couple of days we treated many wounded soldiers in that village. Serious cases, after temporary dressings were applied by us, had to be sent to the nearest improvised hospitals. The injured patriots we met then, were chiefly the fighters and survivors of the battles fought at Yu Hwa Dai and Tse Ching Shan, the two well-known hills where the imperialists treacherously hoisted white flags signifying their surrender. When the revolutionists marched forward to shake hands with them, they proved treacherous fighters. The unexpected opposition nevertheless acted as a stimulant, adding more energy and spirit to the revolutionists.

In the midnight of November 30, the battle of Tien Pao Chen was fought. The field was rather distant from our lodging, only cannonading could be heard. We did not attempt to go out at night as the officers near our hut advised us not to travel in the dark. We slept on hay and straw over night and marched to Tien Pao Chen next day. We met hundreds of wounded soldiers on the way and rendered our assistance wherever needed. In the beginning of our work, we had a registrar to note down the names of the injured soldiers, the character of the wound and the regiment to which they belonged. But later we found we had no time to waste on this unimportant registration, so we devoted our energy along more serviceable lines. We dispensed with the recording. Every one in our party had come to be an active member.

I asked the veterans why they fought at midnight, an awkward hour for us to rescue efficiently. They said that Tien Pao Chen was a fortified hill and that an attack to be effective must necessarily be done at night, not in the day. Most of the bullet wounds I saw, were wounds made by

bullets having passed entirely through the body. As I learned, those bullets must be made of steel else they would not have such penetrative powers.

One of the soldiers had a bullet wound in the front of his right chest about one inch outside the nipple with an exit wound on the back about three inches away from the spinal column. I thought it must have penetrated the pleura and the right lung. But to my surprise, the bullet had run along the line of the fifth rib and come out without leaving any injury to the organ of respiration.

Lucky men lived and survived even though they sustained severe wounds. Unlucky ones died on the spot when they thought themselves safe. There was a merchant unintentionally shot by a revolutionist during the fighting. The bullet went into the middle of his thigh, fractured the femur as it hit against the bone, and a second wound was made on the inner side of the thigh; continuing its course the bullet struck against the other thigh and penetrated through the muscles—a total of four wounds with a compound fracture resulting from a single bullet. I first saw him after he had been wounded four days. Septic inflammation set in. The man refused any treatment whatever, and only said that he wanted to go home and die on his bed.

When we were walking across a field, there were two persons far ahead of us; one was an old farmer and the other a small lad, possibly his grandson. It was so sad to see a cannon ball from a distant place fall like a shooting star on this poor couple and explode. When we reached the spot, there remained only the dead child, the old man had disappeared, probably cremated alive.

On December 1, we were directed to the Tiger Hill, which we reached after a six hours' walk. We visited the revolutionary general Li Tien Chan, who was very hospitable and kind to us; after a moment's rest, he ordered his subordinate to accompany us to the soldiers' quarters, where the sick and the injured were lying, groaning in pain and suffering untold agony. We treated the urgent cases first and then one by one we tried our best to minister to

the others. The suffering men appreciated our work although we could not relieve them at once.

When we got through our cases, we walked back to General Li's residence. This occupied forty-five minutes. Although it was a short journey, it was nevertheless a trying one and required much courage. The revolutionary and the imperial artillerymen were exchanging their shrapnel and shells from the Lion Hill to the Tiger Hill and vice versa. The sky above our heads was like a realm of meteors and shooting stars. We saw the shells striking the valley explode with loud noise and furious conflagration. I ordered my companions to walk far apart each, leaving an interval of fifteen to twenty feet and told my much scared brother that death was not so terrible as it was imagined, and that there should be no fear of cannon balls. Fortunately they struck only against the rocks and none of them hurt any of us.

We passed the night at the foot of the hill and we slept in the room next to General Li. The beds and bedding that he provided for us, were much nicer than the straw and hay beds of the previous nights. As the residence was erected under the castle, every cannonade gave us a violent shake. The windows, the doors, the beds, the tables, in fact all the articles of furniture were in a jerky motion throughout the night, and the lamps on account of incessant jarring could not give light as desired.

When we were sitting in the parlor, a soldier, panting as he entered the room, reported information which he had discovered and handed to the General a package of things obtained from the imperialists. He was warmly welcomed by his superior and was rewarded with a sum of three dollars for his skillful spying.

General Li, as I learned from the veterans and the survivors, captured this Tiger Hill with an infantry of two hundred men. Since then, he had to enlist every day a crowd of new comers from the imperial side as the ill-treatment of the Tartar general could not be tolerated even by his own people. They came to seek for refuge and to fight for liberty. The number of General Li's soldiers was increased to over 2000 when we were there.

In the city of Nanking terror prevailed. Rumors reigned in the streets. Suspicions grew every now and then. Slaughters were reported daily. Unmerciful tyrants wielded their power in such an abusive manner that no human being would side with the imperialists. Chang Shun was especially faithful to the Manchu government. His faithfulness came to an end when Nanking fell.

Here is another instance that is worth mentioning. Though the guards of the castle on the Lion Hill were under the jurisdiction of Chang Shun, none of the gunners there would venture to attack their own countrymen on the Tiger Hill which was only about four miles distant. They knew that General Li had made his headquarters there, and that a large number of soldiers camped in the plains of the Tiger Hill. They understood their principle of love of brethren better than did their commanders. Consequently when an order was given to bombard their sister hill, the gunners purposely aimed in a slightly different direction, so that the cannon-balls merely hit the impenetrable cliff or flew high up in the sky. They never intended to harm their brethren on the Tiger Hill.

The imperial general learned their dissimulations and had two of them beheaded for disloyalty. But the rest of the gunners grew even more patriotic; they claimed that they would rather lose their heads than fire against their brethren. So another two were killed. Then the general supervised the cannonading and found that his men would never aim directly at the enemy, so a third pair of patriots were decapitated. A noble sacrifice of six lives saved thousands of others simply for love of brothers.

Action speaks louder than words and is always appreciated. The revolutionary gunners on the opposite side never tried to shower their shells on the Tiger Hill. Their shrapnel, on the contrary, were all directed to the Tartar town in the center of the city. Unless the Manchus surrendered with their ammunitions, the people would not cease their cannonading.

Such was the mutual understanding of the gunners on both sides. The Lion and the Tiger had secretly come to

an alliance. So a week of bombarding elapsed and the two hills, although but a short distance apart, had not injured each other's castles nor camps.

December 2 was a bright and clear winter morning. The sky looked smiling. The sun sent down its golden rays as if to congratulate and console the hard fighting patriots. To our surprise and unexpected joy, a white flag of surrender was hoisted at 6 o'clock in the morning high up on the Lion Hill on the imperial side, with a three colored flag attached signifying welcome. In addition to the hoisting of the flags, the Lion Hill gunners fired two shells to open a part of the wall of the city and a third to the center of the Tartar town and a fourth to Pukow on the other side of the Yantze River where the imperial generals hid themselves in the last days of the siege.

With triumphant joy, the revolutionists took the possession of this old capital and made the Nanyang Exhibition Buildings the Administrative Halls. Peace began to reign and order followed gradually. When we walked into the city, we met a band of Amazon corps, wearing long unique uniforms, holding a newly designed banner, and marching into the Wai Feng Gate. Splendid work, as reported, was done by these masculine ladies, especially in throwing bombs and close fights.

Our company, losing its way, did not visit the Tartar town, as we intended. We learned afterwards that it was fortunate that we did not visit this hazardous place, for the Manchus, before surrendering to us, had laid a number of bomb-chests, which were all exploded one by one, when unlucky folks stepped accidentally on them.

We went, on December 4, to Pukow where Chang Shun and his five hundred foot-soldiers took the train at the Tien Tsin Pukow Railway station and fled to the north early in the morning of December 2. There we attended about two score of wounded soldiers. Two days after we returned home, our bodies emaciated on account of the deprivation of nutritive food and the lack of sufficient sleep, as we had been compelled to live for several days on turnips and crackers and had to retire on uncomfortable beds.

But the soldiers were much more exhausted, as proper nutrition and rest were far beyond the possibility of their reach. The triumphant joys of those who had suffered for the Republic compensated them for hardships better than any material reward.

The fall of Nanking was the beginning of the new government. During the truce between the revolutionists and the imperialists the latter had made thorough preparations and obtained new equipment. When it expired, they were able to take possession of the cities of Hankow and Hangyang. Had the revolutionists failed in the siege of Nanking, it would have meant their end. The most critical hours were when my companions and myself were doing our work in the suburb of the city. Soon after the triumph, Sun Yat Sen took up his residence in this provincial capital, and the provisional republican form of government was for the first time in the Far East inaugurated with representatives from the different provinces of the country.

As the fighting was carried on by troops from different sections of the nation, naturally the field of operations was extended to a vast area; and what I have related is only a fractional part of the occurrences and incidences of the whole campaign. I do not attempt to dwell on topics concerning happenings that I did not see for fear of misrepresentation or misinterpretation.

To an observer of this revolution, it is interesting to notice that the spirit of the people of every corner of the nation favored the revolutionists. It may be said that every citizen was a revolutionist. It was most wonderfully impressed upon the minds of the whole populace that the old government had to lose and the revolutionists had to win; that the question of success or failure was a question of the life or death of the country at large, not a question of individual interest. On hearing the firing of rifles or the cannonading of guns, even the ignorant country folks would yell from the bottom of their hearts "Woe to the government!" or "Hail for the people!"

How the Chinese, numbering one quarter of the human race, have been able to agree unanimously on the over-

throw of the Manchurian yoke; how the revolution has been completed in so vast a country in so short a space of time with comparatively so small a cost of life is really a mystery that no one can yet fully explain.

Here I shall mention briefly some factors, which seem to me to be causes of the revolution. In tracing the remote causes, I must say that the general awakening of the conservative Chinese began in the year 1894 when China was defeated in the Chino-Japan war. The second period of awakening began in 1900 when the allied troops besieged the capital of the empire. Since then, the tide of new learning has rushed in with full speed until the minds of the scholars have been saturated with the translations from works of Montesquieu and of Rousseau, their brains have been permeated with the accounts of the lives of Peter the Great and of George Washington. It is the education that pushes the people ahead. Corruption of the government, however, was not a small contributing factor of this gigantic revolt. Everywhere the people realized the weakness and pessimism of the government which could never be trusted and would never raise the standard of the nation's prestige. Favoritism and bribery were almighty. The sluggish, selfish and oppressive nature of the Manchu government had led us to overthrow it entirely, after gentle appealings were unsuccessfully and ineffectively resorted to. One of the immediate causes was the railway riot in Szechuan. The government attempted to buy the people's bonds with the loans from foreign nations. The shareholders rejected this. The government applied force and oppression. Troops were summoned to fight against the disobedient people. This aggravated the revolutionary idea. Soon after, the revolution started in Wuchang.

One of the factors last mentioned, although by no means of least importance, was the activity of the newspapers. They preached political sermons, awakened the people and informed them of the aggressiveness of some nations against our country, and encouraged the revolution from the beginning to the end.

In conclusion, I would like to draw your attention to the

fact that the Manchus, although our enemies for awhile, yet as soon as they gave up their arms, have been looked upon as our own countrymen, having the same privileges and rights as enjoyed by the Chinese. In additon to the royal pension and that for the imperial clan, we are supporting them individually with regular monthly allowances, as was done previously, until they are able to earn their livings. So it is manifest that one-eighth of the whole population of China is living parasitically at the expense of the rest. It has been calculated that this enormous sum of money would be sufficient to pay the indemnities of the past years, if we simply abolish this imperial clan payment. This is a matter of generosity and love of brethren which has simplified the revolution and shortened its course.

As to the future of China, no observer has any doubt that the recent revolution marks the dawn of a new era. It would be only too natural that the country must take some time to recover peace and order. Soon a firm and responsible government will be established, the people united, integrity promoted, education enforced, natural wealth developed, industry improved and commerce facilitated—every possible reform will be gradually carried out, and our relations with other nations will be more intimate and friendly, especially with the sympathizing Americans, who assist and understand us better than other nations. Like American citizens and patriots of one hundred and thirty-seven years ago, we fought for freedom, liberty, and self-government. May the Coasts of the Pacific Ocean be the regions of the two Republics everlasting! May we join our hands closer and closer to keep the world at peace to encourage arbitration and to do away with war!